

### **LEAC-ODWC and Lake Eufaula Management Perspective**

The mission of the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation (ODWC) is the management, protection, and enhancement of wildlife resources and habitat for the scientific, educational, recreational, aesthetic, and economic benefits to present and future generations of citizens and visitors to Oklahoma. The ODWC manages fish and wildlife in and around Lake Eufaula. Specific concerns, both present and future, relate to maintaining and improving hunting and waterfowl management opportunities, promoting sport fishing opportunities, reservoir sedimentation, shoreline degradation, loss of shoreline and in-stream fisheries habitat/vegetation, residential shoreline development, and monitoring/preventing the spread of aquatic nuisance species such as zebra mussels.

Stable water conditions are ideal and promote aquatic and terrestrial shoreline vegetation growth that reduces overall shoreline erosion. However, water needs present continuous obstacles in this regard. The ODWC, in keeping with its designated mission, will be focused on the management, protection, and enhancement of wildlife resources and habitat to maintain and improve recreational, aesthetic, and economic benefits on Lake Eufaula. Allocating sufficient water storage and or cooperating with current users to adequately maintain fish and waterfowl habitat, by promoting aquatic and terrestrial shoreline vegetation growth is vital to the ODWC's ability to continue providing for fish and wildlife oriented recreational opportunities.

ODWC Wildlife managers work to maximize habitats and actively manage game species as well as other wildlife species. The Eufaula Wildlife Management Area is comprised of six portions that represent 48,614 acres: Deep Fork Arm, Duchess Creek Arm, Mill Creek Arm, Gaines Creek Arm, North Canadian Arm and the South Canadian Arm. The majority of the area is located on the upper reaches of river and creek arms of Eufaula Lake. Approximately 1,200 acres are farmed on the WMA throughout the year through lease agreements. The WMA is also host to a number of natural wetland areas and sloughs as well as about 780 acres of constructed wetland units.

ODWC Fisheries managers actively manage the lake for largemouth bass, smallmouth bass, and crappie sportfishing. The lake is a popular destination for bass, catfish and crappie anglers and associated tournaments, as well as catfish noodling. The Lake Eufaula tailrace is a popular fishery and is also a source for striped bass broodstock for the ODWC's hatchery system. Adult striped bass are collected directly below the dam in the spring during their spawn. The adult fish are transported to the Byron State Fish Hatchery where they are crossed with native white bass to facilitate hybrid striped bass stocking programs around the state. ODWC's production of hybrid striped bass also facilitates hybrid striped bass programs in several other states as part of inter-state cooperative efforts.

Two important factors for waterfowl habitat on the lake shoreline are – low water in the July-Aug-Sept (which allows for native wetland habitat/waterfowl food species to grow and provides conditions for the Japanese millet seeding program) and higher water in the winter, Nov-Dec-Jan (which allows shoreline vegetation to be inundated which makes the fore-mentioned vegetation to be available to migrating waterfowl, primarily dabbling ducks). At the same time, stable water levels in the April – May time period improve spawning success for bass and crappie. A summer rise (June-Aug) of 1 – 2 ft. in water levels provides escape cover for newly spawned fish and improves their survival and recruitment. The ODWC will be requesting consideration for water level manipulations to improve spawning success, survival, and recruitment of bass and crappie and to promote waterfowl habitat and forage availability. Waterfowl and fisheries management water elevation needs and timing often conflict with each other. Wildlife and Fisheries managers will look for ways to maximize the benefits and reduce conflict when presenting recommendations.

In addition to fish and wildlife management, the ODWC cooperates with cities, state agencies, counties and other public entities in the construction and maintenance of boating and fishing access facilities on water bodies across the state through the federal Sport Fish Restoration Program. There is currently 6 such cooperative boating or fishing access projects on Lake Eufaula still within their designated 20-year life agreements.